

BOOK REVIEW

FLORA ZAMBESIACA. Volume Four, edited by E. Launert, with pp. 658 + 168 line drawings, 1 colour frontispiece. Families covered: Rosaceae—Cornaceae (Crassulaceae excepted). London: Flora Zambesiaca Managing Committee, 1978. Price £20.00.

The publication of another volume of *Flora Zambesiaca* is an event of importance to those who study the plants of Africa south of the Sahara and to all who have interest in these plants.

Volume Four, as the Editor's Preface states, is the first of the sequence to be published in its entirety instead of in two or more parts. The large number of pages makes for less easy handling than with the previous numbers, but the pages mostly lie flat for working so the thickness may not prove a disadvantage. Again the well executed line drawings of representative plants are a pleasure to the eye and a help to the user, while the text, as before, seems to have been meticulously proof read.

Thirty four families are dealt with. A number are small taxa comprising, at least in the area under consideration, only few genera and species: examples are Vahliaceae—D. M. Bridson, Montiniaceae—E. J. Mendes, Brexiaceae—N. K. B. Robson, Myrothamnaceae—E. J. Mendes, Oliniaceae—B. Verdcourt, Sonneratiaceae—A. Fernandes, Trapaceae—J. P. M. Brenan. Despite limited size these taxa are not necessarily straightforward taxonomically. Variability has frequently been remarked upon by the specialist authors who have also drawn attention to alternative taxonomic treatments where these exist, and to plants or features of plants that require further study.

Other families are very much larger and already "famous" for the problems they present. Thus the accounts of Combretaceae—A. W. Exell, Myrtaceae—F. White, Passifloraceae—R. and A. Fernandes, Cucurbitaceae—C. Jeffrey and Umbelliferae and Araliaceae—J. F. M. Cannon are likely to prove valuable not only to herbarium personnel, but to ecologists and others who require identifications of plants in the course of their work. Also deserving special mention, but in a slightly different context since the plants are less often woody or climbing and thus perhaps less significant in the overall vegetation, but often problematical when naming is required, are the accounts of Aizoaceae *sensu lato* (here split into Molluginaceae, Aizoaceae *sensu stricto*, Mesembryanthemaceae and Tetragoniaceae—M. L. Gonçalves) and Lythraceae—A. Fernandes. To assist with problems relating to the delimitation of taxa in *Syzygium*, a sheet giving the outline shapes and relative size ranges of leaves of species and interspecific hybrids is tucked into a pocket on the back cover.

Crassulaceae, which should have been included, had unfortunately to be omitted due to the death of the world authority on this taxon, Dr Raymond-Hamet. The account of this family, now to be written by Dr Rosette Fernandes, will be published out of sequence in the next volume or part of the Flora to appear. In view of this omission it is unfortunate (although well understandable in the circumstances) that the frontispiece, the only colour plate in the volume, depicts *Kalanchoe rotundifolia*.

Many of the families covered in Volume Four have already been dealt with for the *Flora of Tropical East Africa*, sometimes by the same specialist, sometimes by another, so that it is felt that the tropical representatives are now reasonably well documented. However some taxa extend further south. Only few of the families dealt with in Volume Four have been included in the volumes of the *Flora of Southern Africa* published so far. Much remains to be done in the southern part of Africa. Most of us are well aware of this and of the need for speed before vegetational changes are too extreme.

In the Volume under review nine new names and taxa are published. Two of these (both in *Begonia*) are species newly described; six are new combinations of names; one is a change in status. It is perhaps interesting to note that in this volume "Umbelliferae" is used without reference to the less familiar alternative "Apiaceae".

As is usual with regional floras, a brief summary of the distribution of a taxon outside the area of the Flora follows the citation of specimens. Since this review is for a South African journal it might be as well to stress that the distributions given for the Republic and its associated countries are approximations. For example: both *Ceriops tagal* and *Rhizophora mucronata* are stated to extend "to S. Africa (Durban)" whereas, to the best of my knowledge, the former falls away at Kosi Bay while the limit for the latter is slightly south of Durban; *Pteleopsis* is not recorded for S. Africa but occurs in Tongaland; *Gunnera perpensa* is not recorded for Natal where it is widespread along streambanks.

At twenty pounds the cost of the volume is by no means excessive considering the information it contains.

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